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EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy will travel to Colorado and New Mexico tomorrow to oversee efforts to clean up large spill caused inadvertently last week by EPA workers.

McCarthy will visit Durango, Colo., where EPA has set up a command center. She will also travel to Farmington, N.M., which is downriver from the spill.

EPA employees were working at a long-abandoned gold mine in Colorado when they accidentally breached a wall and released 3 million gallons of wastewater that contained lead, arsenic and other heavy metals.

The deluge turned the normally blue Animas River a sickly yellow. Officials and local residents have stopped drawing water from the river until EPA deems it safe. There have not yet been any reports of sickness, and McCarthy said this morning that initial testing already shows toxicity levels on “a downward trajectory toward pre-event conditions.”

The agency has kept the White House updated, according to McCarthy.

McCarthy said earlier today that the accident is “tragic” and that the agency “is taking responsibility to ensure that it is cleaned up.”

She also apologized that EPA had caused such pollution when its mandate is to protect water quality. “I am absolutely, deeply sorry that this ever happened,” she told reporters.

— Alex Guillen

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